

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Shepherdswell Village Hall on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 1900hrs

### 1. Present

Cllr T Hunt (Chair), C Tearle (Parish Clerk) and 43 members of the public.

### 2. Apologies

None

### 3. Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023

These were approved.

### 4. Matters Arising

Shepherdswell against the Development (SAD) will in future be known as Shepherdswell Matters.

### 5. Stagecoach

A presentation was given by the operations manager who said that the Connect Services were launched in 2022 and has met with some success. The one that serves the local villages is partially funded by S106 monies from Dover DC and Aylesham PC. There are two buses Monday to Friday 0700–1900hrs and two at the weekend 0900–1900hrs with three dedicated drivers working on a rota.

It is hoped that funding for school transport will continue when the current funding comes to an end this summer.

### 6. East Kent Railway

In recent years visitor numbers have gone from 900 to 14,000/year which is the reason why there is a need to improve the facilities and also create a museum with the assistance of the local history society. A public consultation will shortly be launched about future operations.

Much of the old rolling stock has been changed. The current cost of running a steam train for a day is £750.

### 7. Community Land Trust (CLT)

The project which has just started is now called Carpenters Yard and is for four single, four two bedroom and two three bedroom dwellings with the balance for either rented or shared accommodation for local people. Three of the thirteen properties will be available on the open market to help finance the project. This project will provide homes for approximately 25 people. There will be 2 parking spaces/dwelling and 7 visitor spaces whilst the single dwellings will have one. It is hoped these will be occupied by the end of the year.

Although the current plans received the required planning consent, KCC Highways Officers now prefer footway access to the site to be through Reed Meadow which is owned by the Parish Council. A proposal has been given to the councillors for consideration. The local CLT will always continue to hold the freehold of the land and English Rural the properties.

## **8. Neighbourhood Watch (NW)**

A short presentation was given by A Judd who thanked Cllrs L Symes and S Taber for promoting NW locally which is a community based crime reduction scheme. Members of the scheme may get a small reduction on their house insurance. Promotions are done at village fetes etc. and a lot of promotional material is available. There will be a re-organisation on the 6<sup>th</sup> June.

## **9. Chair's Annual Report**

2022/23 has been an exceptionally busy year for the parish council.

We have seen the commencement of the long awaited low cost housing development. We are aware that this has caused concern in the village but there was a real need for such a project. This was clearly identified some years ago when the parish appraisal form was distributed to all villagers for completion. The work is progressing well but as part of the building works it is necessary for some road closures in Coxhill to be made to enable contractors to install drains and sewers for the new development. There were many comments on social media about the original proposed road closure that could have caused chaos in the village.

However the council has met with contractors who have now agreed to phase this work into three zones so that access to the village hall, car park and pre-school will be maintained throughout the works period. There may possibly be additional works carried out by KCC highways to clear out and improve the drainage on Coxhill but we are awaiting confirmation of this. We freely admit there have been problems, but I am sure that when the work is finally completed it will be viewed by most as an asset to the village that will enable younger people from the village to remain living in Shepherdswell while paying an affordable rent.

Moving on to finances, many of you will have realised that the parish precept has been increased by 10% for 2023/24. This follows several years of the precept not being increased at all.

The budget that was set in November 2022 anticipated an expenditure of £69,000 against an income of £56,000 to enable us to move forward into 2023/24 confident that we are on a sound financial footing, thus the increase in precept.

Planting a tree to mark the King's coronation.

Highway improvements including ideas for traffic calming.

Formalising health and safety audits for the parish.

Assisting the school in purchasing a mini bus that would be available for use within the parish.

During the last twelve months we have agreed expenditure on several items including:

- A) Replacing the posts and rails around the village green in Shepherdswell and this is due to commence during the summer school holidays.
- B) New cemetery gates and generally tidying up of the area.
- C) Tree maintenance around the parish – Shepherdswell and Coldred
- D) Highway improvements to the layby adjacent to the co-op
- E) Negotiated renewal of the ground maintenance contract

As always when requesting costings for work we ask for a minimum of three tenders and when received these are discussed and voted on by the council.

You may be aware that the village hall has suffered several leaks recently, coming from the copper piping that was used when the hall was built. It has now come to light that during the construction period copper was in very short supply and pipes were often imported from several sources including China and eastern Europe. This piping was not of the same quality as UK sourced supplies, hence the deterioration of the existing pipework. We are now faced with having to replace all the pipe work to avoid major leaks occurring in the future.

We have set aside an amount of £10,000 towards the total cost of this work but it is apparent that this sum will not be sufficient- we are expecting a total cost of around £25,000 so shall need to use some of our reserves to cover this cost.

Incidentally we are expected by the District Auditor under normal accounting procedures to hold reserves equivalent to the income obtained annually from the parish precept. This is why there is a substantial sum in the council's reserve fund as shown on the council's statement of accounts that will be available to view on the council's website.

The council has dealt with many planning applications over the last twelve months - some we recommended approval and others refusal, but ultimately it is the planning department at DDC that makes the final decision.

We are aware of the outline planning applications for 10 houses around the doctor's surgery and these are now being considered. We are also very aware that there is a major development planned as an extension of St Andrew's Gardens and the council will consider both these applications carefully when planning permission is requested.

As you will be aware, the Dover Local Plan has been published and the council commented on this. We were pleased that several areas originally earmarked for possible development have now been deleted from the local plan. This included an area of land off Westcourt Lane that was eventually deemed by the highway authorities as unsuitable due to the lack of footpath facilities. Several areas of land in the Mill Lane locality were also excluded as the landowner objected to this.

There is a possibility that the field opposite the new development at Coxhill could be used for housing - nothing has yet been submitted, but this area was included in the Dover Local Plan.

There is no doubt that we will be faced with many more applications in the coming years and all will receive the attention of the planning sub-committees before being passed to the full council for consideration. These applications will then be returned to DDC with the parish council's recommendations.

Moving on, there has been much speculation and rumour circulating recently, regarding a lease requested by the cricket club to use the recreation ground.

Let me be quite clear about this - no such lease exists. We have an agenda item at our next parish council meeting to discuss the possibility of granting a lease or some type of formal agreement to the cricket club.

The reasoning behind this is to give the cricket club security of tenure, needed by the club to enable it to apply for grants to improve the wicket areas.

The recreation ground is in the ownership and care of the parish council for the enjoyment of everyone and if such a lease or agreement is granted nothing will change. The recreation ground will be available to everyone to use as has been the case since its creation.

Other items that the council will be discussing in the coming year include:

The possible creation of a footpath from the Community Land Trust development - which we now know will be called Carpenters Yard - to allow safe pedestrian access to Coxhill. Further details about this will be published when we have more information.

Trees for the Reed Meadow plantation.  
More equipment for the recreation ground play area  
Planting a tree to mark the King's coronation  
Highway improvements including ideas for traffic calming  
Formalising health and safety audits for the parish  
Assisting the school in purchasing a mini bus that would be available for use within the parish.

## **10. Provisional Financial Report 2022/23**

The data for the financial year shows that we had an income of approximately y £60K against an expenditure of £75K. This year the Council has budgeted for an income of £57K against an expenditure of £69K.

As well as the usual statutory and maintenance expenditure the other items of significant expenditure were: A by-election £2.3K; Community Land Trust £1.3K; Village Hall £2.3K; Parish Magazine £1.8K; Picnic Benches £2.5K; Reed Meadow access improvement and gates £5K; Coldred Pond maintenance £3.7K and Playbark for children's play area £2.4K. Once audited a set of full accounts will be placed on the website.

## **11. County Councillor's Report - Cllr D Beaney**

This year has been very challenging for everyone living in Kent. KCC along with so many other Councils have struggled to deal with difficult problems all year.

We have seen huge inflation, the war in Ukraine and our borders constantly being broke with Asylum seekers.

We had a huge task of trying to set a budget this year, financial monitoring at the 9th month which is December showed a predicted over spend of £53 million pounds and we was able to use a reserve tank of £25million against this, however it is inevitable that we will over-spend this year.

As mentioned before we have huge mandatory sectors of KCC that could use our budget alone, SEND being one of those.

We have had to deal with constant battles with border force. In the last year we have had three occasions where the problem has become a huge problem for Dover Town and Kent. For the up and coming Easter weekend ferries are being asked not to book too many coaches on to one boat to try and ease immigration problems at passport control.

We have continued to help residents as much as we can. In the last several school holidays we have given out food vouchers for eligible children we continue to give free school meals, we have run a financial hardship scheme and have tried to keep as much support and services going to entitled residents with energy vouchers and water bills being paid.

We saw children's services receiving outstanding by Ofsted. In February KCC was designated one of the only 14 trailblazer councils for developing in the government's family hubs which is designed to provide integrated support for families and children this eventually gives us to access to 10 million pounds for transformation funding over the next two years.

We have seen a increase in Asylum seekers entering our country on small boats we are currently trying to home and support 1390 unaccompanied Asylum seeking children from last year and we have now seen 260 enter this year that will receive the same help and support.

As a country we made the choice to try to help people in Ukraine by offering them refuge in England, Kent currently have 1767 guests staying with 854 sponsors. We have 349 Ukrainian children in our primary schools and 234 in our secondary schools.

I will continue to help and support our rural buses. we have received some money from central government, but unfortunately we won't know how that is being spent until June or July this year.

KCC have fixed 14000 pot holes in the last year and have patched 68414 sqm of road. We have received another £6 million for much needed road repairs

KCC are constantly looking for funding, they have just received £1.83 million to put towards refurbishing 5 of their old buildings, this money is going to be spent on making them more efficient and this includes new windows.

We saw 19007 apply for secondary school places 78.2% of children got there first choice. I believe you will see a difference in how s106 money will be contained when planning applications for larger developments go forward, I can see a lot more money being asked for better forms of sustainable transport.

## **12. District Councillor`s Report (Cllr L Keen)**

Housing has been one of the major issues along with the emotive subject of planning which are just some of the issues that I have had to deal with regularly.

The new mini-but service organised by Stagecoach is a good idea.

Congratulations to the parish council on its submission with regards to the emerging DDC Local Plan. Some of your comments appear to have been taken on board.

My thanks to the parish council for the support given to me in what is now my last term of office.

## **13. DDC Local Plan Update (Cllr M Elgar)**

The new Local Plan proposals have now been passed to the National Planning Inspector with a decision likely by the end of the year.

There are three sites in the parish up for consideration, with DDC appearing confident that their plan will be accepted.

The one thing that we will need to watch out for are the proposed sites in Elvington.

## **14. Community Warden`s Report (J West)**

Issues causing the most concern over the previous year ;

Road works causing congestion and disrupted travel

Construction causing obstructions to highways, mud on highway, vehicles parking on pavements, traffic congestion and blocking of highway

Pot holes

Weather, heavy rain, flooding

Drainage issues causing flooding and excess water on carriageway

Cost of living crisis

Energy prices

Cut backs on services

Bus cut backs

Scams, cybercrime, rogue traders

Thefts of tools

Fuel thefts

Catalytic converters theft

Nuisance noise

Nuisance motorbikes

Parcel thefts

Straying animals

Individual welfare issues

## **15. Shepherdswell & Coldred History Society (Cllr J Bulaitis)**

In the past year, the History Society has put on a series of meetings, including Colin Varrall on Waldershare History, Family History with Carol Howell, Keith's Walk through Time, Martin Crowther on Dover's Maison Dieu, The War in Dhofar with Mark Watson, the Battle of Britain Memorial with Andy Simpson and Barry Duffield. We must also thank Len Howell for standing in a short notice to talk about the *Mappa Mundi*.

Last month I gave a talk on Thomas Williams, the landlord of the Bricklayers Arms. This talk would have been impossible without the help of Maxine, his great granddaughter. Maxine contacted the society through the website – which shows the benefits and reach of our site.

There were two big highlights of the year. Firstly, the Big History Day on the Village Pubs was a great success – and extremely professionally organised by the Team. Secondly, January's meeting in the Methodist Chapel, which will be long remembered. Special thanks are owed to Joe and Sarah Slavin and, of course, Harvey, for the hospitality and the excellently researched and entertaining presentation.

The History Society has been more than its meetings. Our Secretary Carol Howell sent a comment to the Sibertswold School consultation about its name. Keith Roberts produced our attractive annual calendar. Our archives continue to grow and are becoming digitalised and better organised. We secured an important grant from DDC for the publication of an historic book on the First World War by Richard Higgs, the Chair of the Parish Council a hundred years ago. Finally, we have been major players in the establishment of Friends of Three Barrows Down, an association which aims to preserve and publicise the important ancient monument on our Parish boundaries.

## **16. Shepherdswell Village Hall Committee (Cllr C White)**

A busy year again with the hall returning to normal after the Covid restrictions. A slight increase in the hourly rate for hall rental doesn't seem to have affected the bookings.

The hall committee has achieved much again and maintained the property to a high standard with the continued help of Mark the caretaker. Mark is now doing all the decorating as and when needed.

Phil Wolfenden has now stepped back and taking a well earned rest. We cannot thank him enough for all he has done for the hall over the years.

T42 is thriving with thanks to Keith, Christina and the volunteers who gave the hall committee a substantial donation from their profits.

Several water leaks have been detected this year. Luckily the one above the ladies toilet didn't turn out as badly as expected. After drying out the ceiling was able to be redecorated without too much of a problem. Due to a leak in the roof in November which had a major affect on the electrics, especially in the main hall, some lettings had to be cancelled for a few days with the inevitable disruption.

The council has recently carried out a survey of the village hall and will (in time) be replacing the small windows along the side of the hall besides any other major problems that may arise. The Council are also looking into the plumbing, draft proofing the entry doors, extra storage space and a new sign in the car park.

A new fridge and blind for the kitchen has been purchased. The disabled toilet has been upgraded and a new door fitted.

The parish council's carbon neutral group has inspected the hall and are discussing putting solar panels on the roof with some battery storage.

Foldaway small round tables and chairs have been purchased with funding from a grant.

A smart meter has been installed which allows weekly meter readings to ascertain our likely exposure to any electrical cost rises. At the moment we are on a fixed contract until November 2023 so we are expecting these costs to rise in the future. Parking for users remains a problem.

## **17. Reed Meadow Allotment Association**

There have been allotments in Reed Meadow since 2017. There are currently 21 plots, varying in size from 75 to 150 square metres. These are reasonable sizes although the traditional allotment plot is much bigger, being 10x10 poles or approximately 250 square metres. The rent for the largest plot on Reed Meadow is £60 per annum of which £40 is paid to the landlord, the Parish Council.

No services are provided to the allotments. Nevertheless, there is a substantial waiting list for plots which has steadily grown since the first plots were occupied. This year one full plot and one half plot have become available. The allotment association has taken the opportunity to divide the surrendered full plot into two. So with the surrendered half plot, we have been able to get three households off the waiting list. However since that has been done, there have been further requests for plots so lengthening the waiting list which currently stands at 9 households.

As the size of the parish continues to grow with new houses typically having small gardens, we can expect the pressure for allotments to intensify. The Association has asked the Parish Council to approve a modest extension to the allotments but it has refused on three occasions to countenance any expansion. We shall continue to divide plots wherever possible but do not expect this to satisfy the demand.

## **18. Shepherdsweil Cricket Club**

2022 has been another productive year for Shepherdsweil Cricket Club. The club's thriving and ever-expanding junior section had 65 members aged 6-16 signed up, with more than 60% of them residing within the parish of Shepherdsweil with Coldred. The club's junior section also fulfilled a full programme of Development XI fixtures, with some of our more experienced youngsters now regularly representing our senior side and contributing with runs and wickets. The club's senior side has again fulfilled a full calendar of fixtures, with some impressive and some less than impressive performances. The typical 50:50 win: loss ratio remains. The club hosted 18 cricket matches at the Rec last summer, with a further 15 training sessions for junior and senior members, which now number more than 80 individuals. The club currently has 6 fully qualified ECB coaches who volunteer to deliver coaching sessions to the junior section, while it is also volunteers who give up their time to maintain the square and co-ordinate off field activities. Last summer, the club maintained its partnership agreement with Aylesham Primary School, with one of the club's coaches volunteering to offer lunchtime coaching sessions there to support with the club's outreach work in an area with different a socio-economic environment to Shepherdsweil. All of the club's activities are undertaken by volunteers who are passionate in sharing their love of cricket with others.

Off the field, the club has received over £4,000 of grant funding last year, with £2679.50 from Dover District Council to partially fund the purchase of a new mower, which will support the club in preparing strips and ensuring the safety and quality of playing surfaces at The Rec. The club also received a grant of £465 from the Everyday Active Small Group Fund, which is supported by Kent Sport and Physical Activity Service. The grant is to fund the purchasing of playing and coaching equipment for our Development XI, including helmets and other vital protection equipment. This funding will support players when they first start beginning to require protective clothing due to the cost of a full range of kit. The club received a further £410 from Dover District Council for the purchase of further youth

coaching equipment and resources required to host home Development XI games at the recreation ground. Finally, in terms of grants, the club received £1,000 from the England Cricket Board's Inspire to Play Fund to support the club with hosting its annual, and now traditional, end of season youth BBQ and presentation event, which we would like to thank the Parish for authorising a BBQ for.

The club is continuing in its progress towards the coming season with winter nets being well-attended. We have begun publicising our youth sessions and seeking our sponsors for the coming season and pre-season work on the square will begin this weekend, with scarifying, cutting, rolling, marking and fertilising on the cards.

Off the field, the club has unfortunately had to make 3 reports of criminal damage to Kent Police and The Community Warden. Twice the padlocks to the club's storage shelter have had glue poured into them. The club have also reported the deliberate damage to the rope protecting the cricket square, which is essential to ensure the safety of the surface. The rope was deliberately vandalised on multiple occasions over the winter months, but the club have now repaired the damage with a replacement rope. It is important to note that the club has had to spend more than £300 in repairing and replacing vandalised equipment this year. Over the last year, the club has continued to endeavour to work with other groups at the Recreation Ground Forum regarding the building of a suitable high-quality facility. The club is currently seeking a formalisation of the current verbal agreement between the club and the parish council following recent threats to the safe playing of cricket on a protected square.

The meeting finished at 2120hrs.